

SSO principal conductor to be named

The March 7 concert brings to a close the auditioning of candidates for the permanent position of SSO principal conductor.

Guest conductor William Rowson is the last of five candidates to conduct the orchestra as part of the selection process. In the week or so following the concert, the SSO search committee will make its recommendation to the board of directors, and the board will offer the position to one of the five.

The candidates are Mr. Rowson, Nigel Evans, Paul Pulford, Ronald Royer and Daniel Warren. A sixth candidate, Judith Yan, artistic director of the Guelph Symphony Orchestra, removed her name from contention several months ago.

The search committee, chaired by David Murray, has asked musicians and audience members to respond to survey questions following each audition concert. The committee has also interviewed each candidate. Committee members are Mr. Murray, Barbara Young, James Colbeck, Deborah Wunder, Randi Patterson and Kirby Julian.

The SSO has not had a permanent conductor since April 2011. At that time, Jerome Summers, one of the orchestra's founders, left his position as music director. Since then the orchestra has performed under the baton of guest conductors, including former Stratford Festival music director Berthold Carrière and Barbara Young, who had worked closely with Mr. Carrière at the Festival. The two served as SSO co-music directors while the orchestra organization worked to develop firmer footing, financially and artistically. They have now been named Music Directors Emeritus as the orchestra enters its second decade, with a permanent conductor at the helm.

The decision to name a principal conductor, rather than a music director, means the artistic programming will remain in the hands of an artistic advisory committee, where it has been since Mr. Summers departed. During this time, says Mr. Murray, "we've done a lot of work with engaging the community and I think that has stood us in good stead." The orchestra has called upon local musicians, including artists with ties to the community, keeping costs down while still offering topnotch talent.

The new principal conductor will be a part of, but not direct, program planning for coming years. Planning for 2015-2016 is nearly complete and the Season Eleven concert schedule will be announced at a launch celebration this spring. The season will be about "new beginnings," says Mr. Murray. "A new decade, a new

principal conductor. I think everybody should be full of optimism about what's going to happen with the orchestra."